



# Victorian Essential Learning Standards

## Sample Unit

## Responding To An Issue

Level 4 - Civics And Citizenship, English, Information And Communications Technology, Thinking Processes

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# Introduction

In *Responding to an issue* students investigate and take a position on a local issue. They evaluate different aspects of the issue and write an article presenting a response from a selected point of view.

Suggested duration: 5–6 sessions (50 minutes per session).

For further information see the Teaching, learning and assessment activities section.

## Assessment

This unit provides opportunities for students to demonstrate achievement of elements of Level 4 standards in Civics and Citizenship, English, Thinking Processes and Information and Communications Technology.

Students are assessed on their ability to:

- demonstrate understanding that there are different viewpoints on an issue
- develop their own questions for investigation, collect relevant information and make judgements about its worth
- develop reasoned arguments using supporting evidence
- write a newspaper article
- suitably format a newspaper article.

For further information see the Assessment section.

# Victorian Essential Learning Standards

*Responding to an issue* provides opportunities to assess students against elements of Level 4 standards as detailed below:

Strand	Domain	Dimension	Element of standard
Physical, Personal and Social Learning	Civics and Citizenship	Community engagement	... demonstrate understanding that there are different viewpoints on an issue ...
Discipline-based Learning	English	Writing	... produce a variety of texts using structures and features of language appropriate to the purpose, audience and context of writing.  ... employ a variety of strategies for writing ...
Interdisciplinary Learning	Information and Communications Technology	ICT for creating	... produce accurate and suitably formatted products to suit different audiences and purposes.
	Thinking Processes	Reasoning, processing and inquiry	... develop their own questions for investigation, collect relevant information and make judgements about its worth. ... develop reasoned arguments using supporting evidence.

For further information see the [Assessment](#) section.

# Teaching, Learning and Assessment Activities

This unit focuses on researching and developing a response to a local issue.

The activities include:

- Activity 1: What is an issue?
- Activity 2: Selecting and scoping an issue
- Activity 3: Researching the issue
- Activity 4: Writing an article
- Activity 5: Reflection and evaluation.

## Activity 1: What is an issue?

Activities	Supporting the activities	Assessment
	Arrange to have a collection of local newspapers available for this unit. Students could be asked to bring in local newspapers for the two weeks leading up to this activity.	
<p>Explain that something is an issue if there is a diversity of views about that topic.</p> <p>Conduct a class activity where students have to either agree or disagree with the statement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choose several statements from the local paper that all students are likely to agree or disagree on as a class</li><li>• Ask students to move to one side of the room if they agree and to the other side if they disagree</li><li>• Ask students if these are issues since everyone has the same view</li><li>• Move onto statements that will produce a range of views to illustrate how these are issues for the class.</li></ul>		
<p>Organise the students into group of three or four. Ask students to explore the issues that are profiled in the local papers and discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the sorts of issues represented in these local papers and how these issues affect the</li></ul>	<p>The <u>Teacher observation checklist</u> (see <i>Unit resources</i> page 11) can be used throughout this unit to record observations of student behaviour and participation in team work.</p>	<p>Use the <i>Teacher observation checklist</i> to observe students working in groups to assess Interpersonal Development – <i>Working in teams</i>. See <u>Assessment rubric</u> (see <i>Assessment</i> page 8).</p>

<p>local community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• issues they are aware of but are not covered in the paper and why they think these issues are not reported</li> <li>• how headlines are used to attract attention</li> <li>• the style of language used in the articles</li> <li>• how these pieces conform to a predictable pattern or structure.</li> </ul>		
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## Activity 2: Selecting and scoping an issue

Activities	Supporting the activities	Assessment
<p>Arrange students into groups of three or four based on the particular issue identified in Activity 1 that they wish to research.</p> <p>Ask each group to use a set of <i>Question cubes</i> to help frame their research questions focusing on collecting a range of viewpoints on the issue.</p>	<p>Use the <u>Question cube template</u> (see <i>Unit resources</i> page 12) to create a set of cubes for each group.</p> <p>Students take it in turns to roll the dice. With each roll a new question stem is generated. Students use the question stems to develop open ended questions.</p> <p>For more information on <u>Questioning</u> see the <u>Teaching and Learning Resource</u>.</p>	
<p>Ask each group to decide on five or six key questions to guide their research. Ask each group to assign one or two questions to each group member.</p>	<p>The <u>Teacher observation checklist</u> (see <i>Unit resources</i> page 11) can be used throughout this unit to record observations of student behaviour and participation in team work.</p>	<p>Observe students working in groups and record notes on the <i>Teacher observation checklist – Responding to an issue</i> to assess Interpersonal Development – <i>Working in teams</i>. See <u>Assessment rubric</u> (see <i>Assessment</i> page 8).</p>
<p>Ask a reporter from each group to share with the class the questions that their group developed.</p> <p>Ask each group to refine or modify their questions based on listening to the wording of other groups' questions.</p>		

### Activity 3: Researching the issue

Activities	Supporting the activities	Assessment
Brainstorm with students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the sources they can use to gain answers to their research questions</li> <li>the sort of criteria to employ in order to prioritise the material's relative worth (for example, relevance, direct involvement of an individual or whether the figures are up-to-date).</li> </ul>	Provide students with tools such as a <u>SWOT analysis</u> or <u>PMI</u> . For more information see the <u>Teaching and Learning Resource</u> .	
Ask students to undertake individual research on the questions allocated to them by their group.		
Ask groups to gather and evaluate each team member's information.	The <u>Teacher observation checklist</u> (see <i>Unit resources</i> page 11) can be used throughout this unit to record observations of student behaviour and participation in team work.	Observe students working in groups and record notes on the <i>Teacher observation checklist – Responding to an issue</i> to assess Interpersonal Development – <i>Working in teams</i> and Thinking Processes – <i>Reasoning, processing and inquiry</i> See <u>Assessment rubric</u> (see <i>Assessment</i> page 8).

### Activity 4: Writing an article

Activities	Supporting the activities	Assessment
Ask students to use their research to select and make a case for a particular point of view on the issue. This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>taking one side</li> <li>putting the case for both sides</li> <li>writing a background piece.</li> </ul> <p>Ask students to draft an article as if it were to be published in a newspaper. Students need to select the genre of the piece (for example, news article, opinion piece or letter) to reflect the type of information and point of view they plan to present.</p>	Encourage students to select a genre that will challenge them, either in terms of their writing skills or in reframing their existing point of view.	View or collect students' draft articles to assess English – <i>Writing</i> . See <u>Assessment rubric</u> (see <i>Assessment</i> page 8).

Ask students to edit their draft and then format their writing electronically.		Obtain electronic copies of the students' articles to assess English – <i>Writing</i> and Information and Communications Technology – <i>ICT for creating</i> . See <u>Assessment rubric</u> (see <i>Assessment</i> page 8).
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### Activity 5: Reflection and evaluation

Activities	Supporting the activities	Assessment
Ask students to provide a written justification for the genre they have selected for their article.		
<p>Ask students to reflect on the process including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the part of their work they were most proud of and why</li> <li>any changes that they made to any of their research questions during this task</li> <li>listing any questions that they could have added to their research task</li> <li>how they will apply their learning from this task in their future work.</li> </ul>		Collect the written reflections to assess Thinking Processes – <i>Reasoning, processing and inquiry</i> . See <u>Assessment rubric</u> (see <i>Assessment</i> page 8).

# Assessment

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards support a combination of assessment practices:

- Assessment of learning (summative)
- Assessment for learning (formative)
- Assessment as learning (formative).

## Assessment guide

When assessing student achievement, assessment criteria can be developed from relevant standards and associated tasks or activities. The table below shows the assessment criteria related to the assessment tasks and relevant standards and the expected evidence to be used as the basis for assessment.

The table can also be used to assist teachers to make judgments about whether students are working *at* the standard (achieved the standard), progressing *towards* the standard (have not met expectations of the standard) or progressing *beyond* the standard (have exceeded expectations of the standard) for specific assessment criteria. It is provided as a guide only and may be adapted or modified to suit particular classrooms and/or students reporting.

See the Assessment Resource for advice on developing rubrics.

## Assessment tasks: Responding to an issue

Evidence	Element of standard	Assessment criteria	Progressing towards the standard	At the standard	Progressing beyond the standard
<b>Civics and Citizenship – Community engagement</b>					
<u>Teacher observation checklist</u> (see <i>Unit resources</i> page 11). (Activities 1 and 2)	... demonstrate understanding that there are different viewpoints on an issue ...	Ability to take account of differing viewpoints on the issue.	Understands basic differences in viewpoints on an issue, though not always able to explain satisfactorily the reasons behind these viewpoints.	Is able to delineate different viewpoints on an issue and explains the reasons for these different perspectives.	Delineates multiple viewpoints on an issue, understands reasons for these and is able to use this information to enhance personal understandings.
<b>English – Writing</b>					
Draft news article. (Activity 4)	... employ a variety of strategies for writing ...	Ability to plan, edit and proof-read article.	Plans, edits and proof-reads in a superficial manner.	Plans, edits and proof-reads article.	Employs an extensive range of strategies for planning and organising the written piece.
Electronic news article. (Activity 4)	... produce ... a variety of texts ... using structures and features of language	Ability to shape information according to selected purpose,	The written text reflects a limited understanding of the demands of audience,	The written text uses appropriate language; context, purpose and	The written text uses language to persuade the reader; context, purpose and audience are



	appropriate to the purpose, audience and context of writing.	audience and context of writing.	purpose and context and the appropriateness of language use.	audience to shape the structure of the piece.	used to structure the piece to good effect.
<b>Thinking Processes – Reasoning, processing and inquiry</b>					
<u>Teacher observation checklist</u> (see <i>Unit resources</i> page 11). (Activity 3)	... develop their own questions for investigation, collect relevant information ... and make judgments about its worth.	Ability to make judgments about feasibility and relevance of research questions and material.	Expresses support or otherwise for evidence gathered.	Makes judgments about feasibility and relevance of research material collected.	Weighs and reflects the feasibility and relevance of various research materials, using this to inform own point of view.
Written reflection. (Activity 5)	... develop reasoned arguments using supporting evidence.	Ability to justify genre selected in relation to purpose of article.	Describes genre selection without making links to purpose.	Makes clear links between selection of purpose of article and genre selected.	Provides sophisticated rationale for genre selection in relation to purpose of article.
<b>Information and Communications Technology – ICT for creating</b>					
Electronic news article. (Activity 4)	... produce accurate and suitably formatted products to suit different purposes and audiences.	Ability to format article according to conventions of the genre.	Formatting for type of article selected not entirely appropriate.	Produces an accurately and suitably formatted article.	Is able to include advanced features of formatting to enhance final product (such as graphics, titles and positioning).

# Unit Resources

## Teacher resources

Teacher observation checklist – Responding to an issue (see page 11)

Question cube template (see page 12)

Local newspapers can be used to help identify local issues.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Assessment Advice

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Principles of Learning and Teaching (PoLT)

Teaching and Learning Resource

This document provides information about teaching and learning strategies referred to in the task.

Assessment Resource

This document provides information about assessment strategies referred to in the task.

The websites below are included in as recommended starting points. They include information and images suitable for use by students at this level:

Melbourne Water

Sustainability Victoria

Parks Victoria

Parliament @ Work

Department of Sustainability and Environment

Victoria State Emergency Services



Teacher Resource

**Teacher observation checklist – Responding to an issue**  
Use this checklist to observe one or more groups during Activities 1 – 3.

Name	Student contributes to the:				Other comments
	Identification of issues in local papers	Framing of relevant questions	Selection of an issue	Evaluation of research material	

# Question Cube

Print out onto card for best results.

Use glue to fix tabs.

Tape edges for extra strength.



# Question Cube

Print out onto card for best results.

Use glue to fix tabs.

Tape edges for extra strength.

